

# Trihexyphenidyl

(pronounced tri - hexy - fen – ee - dial)

(also known as Benzhexol)

## Why has trihexyphenidyl been prescribed?

Trihexyphenidyl is known as an antimuscarinic drug. These medications are prescribed to relieve the symptoms of Parkinson's disease. They are also used to control similar symptoms caused by antipsychotic drugs.

## What are the benefits of taking trihexyphenidyl?

Antimuscarinics are effective in reducing symptoms such as stiffness and tremor.

## Are there any precautions with trihexyphenidyl?

Trihexyphenidyl is suitable for most people. As with all medicines, however, there are precautions. Your prescriber will usually check that it is safe to prescribe trihexyphenidyl, but let your prescriber know if any of the following apply to you, as extra care may be needed:

- a) if you have glaucoma, myasthenia gravis, urinary retention, gastrointestinal obstruction or suffer from heart, liver, kidney or prostate trouble.
- b) if you are taking any other medication, especially for schizophrenia, dementia, depression or Parkinson's disease, high blood pressure or the painkiller nefopam. Also, tell your prescriber if you buy any medicine 'over the counter' from a pharmacy or supermarket. Please also tell your prescriber if you take any alternative or complementary medicine such as Chinese herbal medicines. St John's Wort should not be taken by patients prescribed trihexyphenidyl.
- c) if you are pregnant, breast feeding, or wish to become pregnant.
- d) If you have an intolerance to lactose as this is an ingredient in the tablets.

## What is the usual dose of trihexyphenidyl?

The starting dose is usually 1mg three to four times daily. The dose may then be increased up to a maximum of 20mg daily.

## How should trihexyphenidyl be taken?

Trihexyphenidyl is usually taken three to four times a day. However, you and your prescriber may decide that it is better for you to take the medicine at another time.

## What form does trihexyphenidyl come in?

Trihexyphenidyl is available as tablets and liquid. The tablets are available as 2mg and 5mg and the liquid comes as 5mg per 5ml.

## What should be done if a dose is missed?

If you forget a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If you miss a whole day's dose – just carry on as normal with the usual dose. If you miss more than a day's dose, speak to your prescriber.

## What will happen when trihexyphenidyl is first taken?

Trihexyphenidyl begins to work in an hour or two. Full effect is not seen for several days. Many people do not experience any side effects. However some people may experience some side effects. We have listed potential side effects in the table below, whether or not they are likely to be short or long-term and what measures can be taken is also described. There are other possible side effects – we have listed only the most important ones. Ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse if you are worried about anything else that you think might be a side effect. Further information on side effects is available in the official manufacturer's leaflet.

## Reporting side effects

The 'Yellow Card' scheme encourages patients to report any side effects that they feel may be caused by their medication. Ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse for the forms if you wish to report any side effects. Alternatively, telephone 0808 100 3352 or go to [www.mhra.gov.uk](http://www.mhra.gov.uk).

## Is trihexyphenidyl addictive?

Trihexyphenidyl is not addictive, but if you stop taking the medicine suddenly, you may experience unpleasant physical feelings. Symptoms can include nausea, insomnia, dizziness, diarrhoea, excess salivation and vivid dreams. Reducing the dose of trihexyphenidyl slowly may make these symptoms less severe.

## What about alcohol?

It is recommended that people taking trihexyphenidyl should not drink alcohol. This is because both antimuscarinics and alcohol can cause confusion and drowsiness. This can lead to falls and accidents. However, once people are used to taking medication, then *very small amounts* of alcohol may not be harmful. It pays to be very careful, because alcohol affects people in different ways, especially when they are taking medication. Never drink alcohol and drive. Discuss any concerns you have with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

**Is it OK to stop taking trihexyphenidyl when symptoms go away?**

No. If you stop taking trihexyphenidyl, your original symptoms may return. Most people need to remain on trihexyphenidyl for several months. You should always discuss with your prescriber any plans you have to reduce or stop any of your prescribed medicines.

**Are there any alternatives to trihexyphenidyl?**

Yes, there are alternatives available. Although antimuscarinics have broadly similar therapeutic effects they differ slightly in the side effects they produce. There are more antimuscarinics available so most people can find one which suits them.

**Summary of side effects**

Side effect	Side effect
<p><b>Dry mouth - Common</b></p> <p><b>What can be done about it?</b> This should wear off within a few days. Sugar-free boiled sweets, chewing gum or eating citrus fruits may help. Taking the tablets before meals may help. Discuss with the prescriber if this persists.</p> 	<p><b>Blurred vision – Common</b></p> <p><b>What can be done about it?</b> This should wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists. It may be necessary to switch to another medication.</p> 
<p><b>Constipation - Common</b></p> <p><b>What can be done about it?</b> Eat lots of fibre – fruit and vegetables are good sources. Drink plenty of fluids. Your prescriber may prescribe a laxative.</p>	
(Other less common) side effects	How common is it and what can be done about it?
Urinary retention (difficulty passing water)	<b>Rare</b> Contact your prescriber straightaway if you have any difficulty passing water.
Euphoria	<b>Rare</b> Tell your prescriber straightaway if you notice any change in mood.
Hallucinations	<b>Rare</b> Tell your prescriber straightaway if you see or hear anything unusual or disturbing.
Nausea (with or without vomiting)	<b>Rare</b> This should wear off within a few days. Taking the medication with food may help. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists.
Insomnia	<b>Rare</b> This should wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists.
Dizziness	<b>Very rare</b> This may wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists.
Confusion	<b>Very rare</b> Tell your prescriber if you experience any changes in your thinking ability. The dose of trihexyphenidyl may need to be reduced.
Memory loss	<b>Very rare</b> Tell your prescriber straightaway if you notice any changes in your memory.
Skin rash	<b>Very rare</b> Tell your prescriber straightaway if any rash develops.

Worsening of mental illness symptoms	<b>Very rare</b> Tell your prescriber if you experience any worsening of symptoms related to mental illness.
Tachycardia (palpitations)	<b>Very rare</b> Contact your prescriber if you experience palpitations.

*Very common* = almost everyone affected      *Common* = many people affected      *Uncommon* = some people affected  
*Rare* = few people affected      *Very rare* = very few or no one affected

### Disclaimer

*This leaflet is to help you understand more about your medication. This is not an official manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet (see <http://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/>). Remember, leaflets like this can only describe some of the effects of medication. You may also find other books or leaflets useful. If you have access to the internet you may find a lot of information there as well, but be careful, as internet based information is not always accurate. If in doubt consult your GP or a health care professional.*

***This leaflet has been supplied by:***

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